

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN
EDITION 2
PART 3**

JIM BENSON: SEVERLY DISABLED SOLDIERS RETURNING FROM IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN FACE MANY CHALLENGES. RECENTLY, A PRIVATELY-FUNDED GROUP, THE COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES, OFFERED SOME OF THESE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES AN ALL-EXPENSE PAID VACATION TO DISNEY WORLD IN FLORIDA.

GILBERT MAGALLANES, IRAQI FREEDOM VETERAN: WE COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE WAS GOING TO OFFER THIS TO US, JUST UNBELIEVABLE.

BENSON: THE LAST THING GILBERT MAGALLANES THOUGHT HE'D BE DOING AFTER RETURNING FROM COMBAT IN IRAQ IS CLIMBING THIS WALL AT DISNEY WORLD.

SHERRY MAGALLANES: YOU KNOW, A TRIP TO DISNEY WORLD, I MEAN, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?

GILBERT MAGALLANES: WHAT ELSE CAN YOU WANT? AS AN OLDER PERSON IN LIFE, I HAD THE MICKEY MOUSE EARS ON MY HEAD ALREADY AND MY SON HE'S LIKE "YEAH!"

ROGER CHAPIN, PRESIDENT OF COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES: THIS IS KIND OF A KICK OFF, OR THE FIRST STOP ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY.

BENSON: THE SPONSER OF THIS EVENT, THE COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES, A GROUP FORMED BY ROGER CHAPIN TO HONOR VETERANS AND HELP THEM GET THEIR LIVES BACK ON TRACK.

DOUG PLANK, EXECUTIVE VICE- PRESIDENT OF COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES: TONIGHT IS ABOUT YOU. TONIGHT IS ABOUT PAYING TRIBUTE TO YOU.

ACTRESS BO DEREK: AND I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU, NEVER.

BENSON: FROM MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKERS, TO TOP LINE ENTERTAINMENT TO INFORMATION ON HOW VETERANS CAN RECEIVE BENEFITS THEY'VE EARNED.

THIS 3 DAY CONFERENCE COMBINED FUN AND EXCITEMENT WITH SERIOUS INFORMATION VITAL FOR DISABLED TROOPS LEAVING THE MILITARY.

CHAPIN: WE WANT TO MAKE THEM BETTER AWARE OF THE OPTIONS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM IN TERMS OF ASSISTANCE THAT CAN BE USEFUL AS PART OF THEIR ROAD TO RECOVERY.

HAROLD KUDLER, VA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: I THINK THIS EVENT THAT WE ARE TAKING PART IN NOW IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF OUTREACH VA NEEDS TO DO. TO GO OUT IN THE COMMUNITY, PARTNER WITH OUR NATURAL PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY, TO GET THE WORD OUT.

GILBERT MAGALLANES: IT'S WONDERFUL THAT YOU CAN PUT ALL THIS INFORMATION IN ONE ROOM IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

KENNETH ADAMS, IRAQI FREEDOM VETERAN: I'VE GOTTEN TO TALK TO A LOT OF WONDERFUL PEOPLE, HEAR A LOT OF STORIES, GOT TO FEEL WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE FELT WHO ARE LIKE ME, WHO ARE DISABLED BUT STILL ABLE TO DO THE THINGS THEY WANT TO DO.

BENSON: BLINDED BY GUNFIRE IN IRAQ, KENNETH ADAMS CAME HERE FOR INFORMATION BUT LEFT WITH A BIG SURPRISE.

OFF-SCREEN SPEAKER: THE COALITION HAS EXTENDED ITS HOMES FOR WHEELCHAIR BOUND TO INCLUDE THOSE WHO WERE BLINDED IN BATTLE. WE ARE HONORED TO PLEDGE HOMES FOR THE JASON ASHLEY PEPPER FAMILY AND THE KENNETH ADAMS FAMILY.

ADAMS: WE GOT A HOUSE FROM SMART HOUSE THAT'S VOICE ACTIVATED.

BENSON: WITH THE HELP OF VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND CORPORATE DONORS THE COALITION AWARDED FIVE SPECIALLY EQUIPPED HOMES FOR DISABLED VETERANS.

ADAMS: INSIDE I WAS CRYING BECAUSE I WAS DEEPLY THANKFUL.

BENSON: VETERANS WALKED AWAY WITH A SENSE THEY WEREN'T ALONE, ARMED WITH MORE SELF ESTEEM AND INFORMATION VITAL TO THEIR FUTURES.

SHERRY MAGALLANES: IF THE COALITION TO SALUTE AMERICA'S HEROES SENDS ME ANOTHER INVITATION, WE'RE ABSOLUTELY GOING TO ACCEPT BECAUSE IT'S BEEN A VERY GOOD EXPERIENCE AND THAT'S SOMETHING WE'LL HAVE FOR A LIFETIME.

BENSON: THE COALITION IS WORKING ON A NUMBER OF OTHER

PROJECTS TO HELP DISABLED VETERANS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR PROGRAMS AND HOW YOU CAN HELP, CHECK OUT THEIR WEB SITE AT WWW.SALUTEHEROES.ORG

WHEN THE AMERICAN VETERAN RETURNS, WE'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE VA'S NEW SECRETARY. STAY WITH US.

PRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

END OF TRANSCRIPT